Advanced Academics in Middle School

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Rigorous Curriculum

- Taking a rigorous curriculum in high school is the best predictor of students’ ability to complete a bachelor’s degree (Answers in the Toolbox, 1999).

- The number and quality of advanced courses a student takes is more significant than GPA or class rank for predicting college success.
Advanced Courses

- Students taking more advanced courses score about 2.4 points higher on the ACT composite than students taking standard graduation plan courses (*ACT High School Profile*, 2005).

- Students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school have higher GPA in college than students who do not take AP courses (*Answers in the Toolbox*, 1999).
Advanced Courses

- Students who have taken AP courses generally score higher on the SAT than students who have not taken AP courses.

- The number of advanced courses a student takes in high school may be a factor considered by a college when making admission decisions.
So what does that mean to a person making decisions about middle school?
Course leveling begins in middle school. Student and parents have choices in their level of rigor in some academic subjects.

Middle school courses build the foundation for advanced courses in high school.
Levels of Courses in CISD

- **Standard Courses**
  Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

- **Pre-AP Courses**
  College Board aligned skills emphasized in addition to the TEKS

- **Gifted and Talented (GT) Courses**
  Accelerated and Enriched curriculum for identified GT students
Pre-AP Program

- College Board ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com))

- Advanced Placement (AP) courses are college level courses taught in high school settings. CHS currently offers 22 AP courses.

- College Board sponsors AP Exams and students in AP courses are expected to take AP Exams in May of each year.
Pre-AP Program

- The Pre-AP program of Coppell ISD is designed to build students’ capacities to be successful in advanced academic courses, in particular, AP Courses.

- The Pre-AP program emphasizes the development of skills that are necessary to learn in rigorous settings (college prep).
Pre-AP Program

College Board and CISD believe, “we can prepare every student for higher intellectual engagement by starting the development of skills and acquisition of knowledge as early as possible. Addressed effectively, the middle and high school years can provide a powerful opportunity to help all students acquire the knowledge, concepts, and skills needed to engage in a higher level of learning.”

www.apcentral.collegeboard.com
Pre-AP Courses

- Pre-AP English
- Pre-AP Mathematics

6th grade
Pre-AP Courses

- Pre-AP English
- Pre-AP Mathematics
- Pre-AP Science
- Pre-AP Social Studies

7th and 8th grade
Pre-AP Mathematics

- **Compacted** curriculum
  1.5 years of math compacted into 1 year

- 6th grade Pre-AP covers all of 6th grade and about half of 7th grade curriculum.
- 7th grade Pre-AP covers half of 7th grade and all of the 8th grade curriculum.
- 8th grade Pre-AP mathematics is Algebra I.
Pre-AP Mathematics

- Students can move from standard math into Pre-AP math after 6th grade, but there could be gaps in understanding.

- If you are considering Pre-AP math, it is recommended that you begin in the Pre-AP sequence in 6th grade.
Pre-AP Mathematics

- Taking Pre-AP math is the pathway to take Algebra I in 8th grade, and a student needs to complete Algebra I in 8th grade in order to take Calculus in high school.

- Some advanced math students use credit-by-exam to advance through Geometry by the end of 8th grade.
GT Courses

- GT Courses are the **most rigorous** courses offered in each subject area.

- GT Courses in middle school use an **accelerated** curriculum for grade-level skills and include **beyond grade-level** skill development as well.
GT Courses in Middle School

- GT English and Integrated Research
  Grades 6, 7, and 8

- GT Mathematics and Advanced Problem Solving
  Grades 6, 7, and 8
GT English

- Two period block (100 minutes)
  - One period of English instruction
  - One period of Integrated Research
GT English

- Faster pace on basic skills
- Attention given to advanced writing and grammar skills
- Read a variety of complex texts
- Teach Pre-AP skills
Integrated Research

- Focus on developing advanced skills in research and communication
- Emphasis on developing independence in our GT students (self-directed learning)
- Integration of skills between language arts and social studies
Integrated Research

- Student choice in developing research projects
- Individualized approach for developing skills and talent in social studies and language arts
- Authentic products and GT performance standards
GT Mathematics

- Two period block (100 minutes)
  - One period of GT mathematics instruction
  - One period of Advanced Problem Solving
GT Math

- Faster pace on basic skills
- Emphasis on mastering algebra skills
- Developing conceptual and theoretical understanding of mathematics
- Develop Pre-AP skills in mathematics
Advanced Problem Solving

- Focus on developing advanced math skills
- Emphasis on scientific method of research and investigation
- Application of mathematics to science and engineering problems
Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are there any special qualifications for taking a Pre-AP course?

No. Pre-AP courses are open enrollment. We do recommend that students and parents make informed decisions about engaging in advanced academic courses.
2. Can my student make a schedule change if he/she determines that a Pre-AP course or GT course is too difficult?

Schedule changes are at the discretion of the school, and we try to keep them at a minimum. Some circumstances may warrant a schedule change, but we encourage students and teachers to work together for student success in our Pre-AP and GT courses.
3. What is the difference between Pre-AP and GT?

The Pre-AP English and mathematics classes are roughly 100 minutes per day. GT English and mathematics are about 50 minutes, but the students then take a separate class for Integrated Research (English) and/or Advanced Problem Solving. Together they total 100 minutes per day. (continued)
Frequently Asked Questions

3. What is the difference between Pre-AP and GT?

Pre-AP classes build advanced skills for learning in the discipline. GT classes do as well, but spend less time on skill instruction and more time on advanced, critical and creative thinking activities.
4. Do advanced classes have more homework than standard courses?

Pre-AP and GT classes may have more homework than standard courses. They typically require more reading, more writing, and more independent practice with the goal of developing advanced skills in those courses. GT and Pre-AP courses have similar amounts of homework.
5. **How might taking advanced academic courses affect my student’s grades?**

Advanced courses may have an effect on GPA because the standards of excellence are set very high in these courses. However, remember that participation in advanced courses has been a better predictor of future success than GPA. We encourage parents to focus on what students are learning rather than the occasional B or C grades they may encounter in the journey.
Summary

Students will encounter high quality instruction in all courses.

The leveled courses are designed to best match students’ areas of interest and instructional level. Choose courses based on what is best for your student not everyone else.
Summary

- Seek academic challenges as the best way to prepare your student for an extended journey from adolescence to adulthood.

- Pre-AP and GT courses provide rigorous learning environments. They require commitment on the part of the students, but the combination of rigor and commitment can have wonderful effects.